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SUBJECT: JAPANESE MORNING PRESS HIGHLIGHTS 06/30/08

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1) Foreign Minister Koumura, Secretary of State Rice in meeting agree to continue pressuring North Korea to resolve abduction issue; U.S. dismisses concerns that it is downplaying abduction issue

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Top play) (Full)
June 28, 2008

Foreign Minister Koumura met with U.S. Secretary of State Rice on the afternoon of June 27 at the Kyoto Guest House in Kyoto City. The two confirmed they would continue to closely cooperate on the North Korea nuclear problem and to work together on North Korea for a quick resolution of the issue of Japanese abducted by North Korean agents. Secretary Rice after the meeting told the press corps this

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about the abduction issue: "Persuading North Korea to tackle the resolution of this issue in positive way is an important policy for the United States, as well. We intend to continue applying pressure on that country." She indicated that the U.S. would continue to press the DPRK for a resolution of the abduction issue even after that country is removed from the list of states sponsoring terrorism.

Secretary Rice's statement seems to be aimed at easing criticism in Japan toward the U.S. decision to delist North Korea, and to present a view that the United States is not brushing aside the abduction issue in the rush to achieve progress on denuclearization.

The two foreign minister in their meeting agreed that now that the North Korean nuclear declaration has been received, it had to undergo a rigid verification, the goal being to make North Korea completely abandon all of its nuclear programs.

Foreign Minister Koumura asked the U.S. to continue to work on the DPRK, saying, "With the notification to the Congress of the U.S. decision, there are worries in Japan that the abduction issue would now be neglected."

In response, Secretary Rice promised to cooperate in achieving an early resolution of the abduction issue, noting, "This is not a problem for Japan alone, for the U.S., too, this is an issue that we should be concerned about."

Rice stressed to the press corps: "We will continue to have a lot of influence on this and will continue to pursue North Korea." Both high officials agreed to cooperate closely in the run up to the G-8 Summit at Lake Toya, Hokkaido, on such issues as climate change and the situation in Zimbabwe, where political turmoil continues.

2) Foreign ministers' meeting confirms cooperation on policy toward North Korea: Japan and U.S. take pains to show bilateral strains are gone, but gap remains on priority order for abduction issue

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
June 28, 2008

The Japanese and U.S. governments at the foreign ministers' meeting on June 27 once more underscored the principle of lining up policy stances toward North Korea. The aim of the Japanese side was to ease

the strains that had been created by the U.S. decision to remove North Korea from the list of states sponsors of terrorism and to bind together the cords of unity once more. However, there remains a gap between Japan and the U.S. over which has priority, the nuclear issue or the abduction issue, so how far solidarity can be maintained is unclear.

Suddenly a mini-press conference

The meeting took place the day after the U.S. had announced its decision to delist the DPRK. Foreign Minister Masahiko Koumura repeatedly drove home the point that the U.S. should not leave the abduction issue behind. He first asked: "We would like to request that the U.S. continue to work on North Korea to the maximum extent possible." Secretary Rice promised: "We will cooperate to bring about a resolution of this issue." She followed up by saying: "Let us cooperate so that both the nuclear issue and the abduction issue move forward together."

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Both took pains in their other appearances, as well, to erase the impression that a gap had grown between Japan and the U.S. At first, after the meeting, Koumura was scheduled to meet the press corps alone to answer questions, but suddenly, it was changed to a mini-press conference with Rice. When asked whether the removal of North Korea from the U.S. terror list was having an adverse effect on Japan-U.S. ties, Foreign Minister Koumura rebutted: "We are not at all thinking of doing anything that would worsen Japan-U.S. relations and make North Korea happy." The two clearly took a stand of solidarity so that North Korea would get no benefit.

"From now on, we would like to apply pressure on North Korea in order to quickly resolve the abduction issue. The abduction issue is important to U.S. policy." Secretary Rice, holding a prepared memo, promised in this way to cooperate to resolve the abduction issue, reading out a quote from President Bush's June 26 announcement.

Both of their statements were designed to turn around what both Japan and the U.S. most feared: the surfacing of an impression that there was discord between the two governments. If the rumor of a gap existing between Japan and the U.S. were to spread, there was concern, according to a senior Foreign Ministry official, "It would play into the hands of the North Koreans."

Alarm that abduction issue would be left behind

However, there remains a large difference in ardor between the American government, which wants to use the delisting as leverage on North Korea to hasten progress on the nuclear front, and the Japanese government, which is alarmed that the U.S. will abandon the abduction cause.

"I would like to ask Hill for an explanation," was the question that came out during the portion of the G-8 Foreign Ministers' Meeting on the morning of June 27 when the theme being discussed was the North Korea problem. Foreign Minister Koumura directed the question on purpose toward Assistant Secretary Hill, who was present at the meeting. He sought an explanation of the North's nuclear declaration, as well as the procedures to delist the DPRK. He seemed, according to a diplomatic source, as if "he wanted to nail him down so that the U.S. could not run on ahead alone."

3) U.S. Secretary of State Rice gives consideration to public opinion; Vows to urge North Korea to resolve abduction issue

SANKEI (Page 3) (Full)
June 29, 2008

Ruriko Kubota in Seoul

U.S. Secretary of State, visiting South Korea, met with Foreign and Trade Minister Yu on June 28. In her press conference after the meeting, Secretary Rice touched on the issue of Japanese abducted by North Korean agents, saying, "The abduction issue between Japan and the DRPK must be resolved soon." She urged North Korea to respond by

resolving the issue, including carrying out a promised reinvestigation. In addition, although she was positive in her remarks about North Korea's nuclear declaration, she confirmed that there needed to be a thorough verification of its contents.

In connection with North Korea's nuclear declaration, Secretary Rice

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pointed out: "We consider the next stage to be extremely important, and on that point, we agreed that there needed to be thorough verification."

Continuing, Secretary Rice brought up the issue of the Japanese abducted by North Korean agents, and she urged the North Koreans to respond earnestly. She said that in that context, the U.S. would handle the declaration, and delist the DPRK. In that sense, she displayed consideration toward the concerns of Japanese public opinion.

She also responded to a question about a separate informal document that would answer the questions of uranium enrichment and suspicion of nuclear cooperation with Syria. She said: "We still do not have sufficient answers that we need. All of the weapons and materials must be scrapped." She stressed a stance of working toward completely reaching the goal of denuclearization.

4) Government fears that abduction issue might be left behind; Reinvestigation steps yet to be determined between Japan and North Korea

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Full)
June 29, 2008

Although the issue of denuclearizing North Korea has moved forward as seen in the United States' policy to delist the North as a state sponsor of terrorism, there are no prospects for Japan-DPRK talks on the issue of Japanese nationals abducted by North Korean agents. There is growing concern in the political community that the abduction issue might be left behind. The government must expedite efforts to produce results of some sort.

At the G-8 foreign ministers meeting held on June 27 in Kyoto, Foreign Minister Masahiko Koumura categorically said: "To the Japanese people, (the abduction issue) is an extremely important humanitarian and human rights issue. It must be shared by the international community."

Koumura's statement reflected the Japanese government's fear that the abduction issue might be left behind. Although an agreement was reached in June 11-12 Japan-DPRK talks on a reinvestigation of the abduction issue (by the North), specific steps for the implementation of the agreement and the timetable for the next round of bilateral talks have yet to be decided. The next six-party talks are expected to take place as early as this week mainly to discuss the verification of the nuclear deflation presented by the North. A Foreign Ministry source familiar with the six-party talks indicated that Japan-DPRK talks on the abduction issue would not be held during the next six-party talks, saying: "Attending the upcoming talks would be North Korean Vice Foreign Minister Kim Kye Gwan not Song Il Ho, ambassador in charge of diplomatic normalization talks with Japan." A view is gaining ground that there would be no visible progress on the abduction issue until after the G-8 Lake Toya summit. Given no specific timeline and steps, doubts are strong in Japan about the effectiveness of the reinvestigation into the abduction issue. Prime Minister Fukuda might find himself under fire unless he can find a lead to progress on the abduction issue during the 45 days before Washington's policy to delist the North as a state sponsor of terrorism takes effect.

5) Delisting of North Korea: Foreign minister accepts priority being

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given to nuclear issue

Referring to the North Korean nuclear and abduction issues, Foreign Minister Koumura on an NHK-TV talk show on June 29 indicated his stance of basically accepting the U.S. decision to take North Korea off its list of state sponsors of terrorism, following the nuclear declaration by that nation. He said: "It is best for the two issues to make progress in a balanced manner. However, it is better for the nuclear issue to make progress than neither issue making progress." Explaining why, Koumura said, "North Korea will not be able to obtain Japan's economic cooperation if it does not settle the abduction issue. If the nuclear issue makes headway, it would be an incentive for it to settle the abduction issue."

Commenting on a reinvestigation into the abduction issue by North Korea, Chief Cabinet Secretary Machimura in a street-corner speech given in Shibuya said, "The Japanese government is about to decide its policy regarding how the investigation should be implemented and how its results should be verified. We will shortly discuss these matters in concrete terms at bilateral talks." Concerning sanctions against North Korea, he said, "We may partially lift sanctions if North Korea takes concrete action."

In contrast, Special Advisor to the Prime Minister on the Abduction Issue Nakayama in a speech given in Kawaguchi City, Saitama Prefecture, underscored, "Sanctions must not be lifted until it becomes clear that North Korea has located the whereabouts of abductees and takes action to return them to Japan."

6) LDP split over U.S. policy to delist North Korea as state sponsor of terrorism; Yamasaki calls for cooperation with U.S., Abe thinks sanctions must be kept in place

Views in the Liberal Democratic Party are now sharply divided over the United States' decision to delist North Korea as a state sponsor of terrorism. On the one hand, former LDP Vice-President Taku Yamasaki has given a positive assessment to the development as a first step toward normalizing relations between Japan and North Korea. On the other hand, former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has expressed concern about Japan losing a vital bargaining chip with the DPRK for resolving the issue of Japanese nationals abducted by North Korean agents. Yamasaki represents a group in the party who give priority to carrying out a dialogue with the North, while Abe represents a second group who prefer pressure tactics. The dispute in the party is likely to continue for a while.

Yamasaki in a meeting on June 27 of Lower House members of his party faction underlined the need to act in concert with the United States, saying: "Five countries (Japan, the United States, South Korea, China, and Russia) have been making unified efforts to bring about a normalization of ties between Japan and North Korea, as well and between the United States and North Korea, while working for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. It is unacceptable for Japan to undermine those efforts." Former Secretary General Koichi Kato and former Defense Agency Director-General Gen Nakatani take views similar to Yamasaki's.

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Abe, however, underscored in remarks to reporters on June 27 the need to keep international sanctions against the DRPK in place: "It is truly regrettable that the United States will take the North off its list of terrorist-sponsoring nations, despite the fact that there has been no progress on the abduction issue. President Bush has indicated that the United States would not forget the abduction issue. There still remains the option of applying international pressure."

Many LDP lawmakers share Abe's concern over Washington's decision. Secretary General Bunmei Ibuki, delivering a speech in Nara on the night of June 27, said: "When the presidential election approaches, the United States always rushes to reach a settlement. During the

Clinton era, the United States was duped (by the North) in the end. (The Japanese government) must say clearly what it has to say to the United States."

Abe and others have yet to directly criticize Prime Minister Fukuda's foreign policy. Nevertheless, Takeo Hiranuma, a former economy, trade and industry minister and the chair of the parliamentary league on the abduction issue, which works closely with Abe, told reporters on June 27: "Japan has lost important leverage for resolving the abduction issue. (Japan's decision to partially lift sanctions) will not do the Fukuda administration any good."

7) Abduction issue: Growing calls in government, ruling parties for implementation of reinvestigation at early date

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
June 30, 2008

Following North Korea's declaration on its nuclear program and the start of U.S. procedures for removing that nation from its list of state sponsors of terrorism, calls for seeking an early implementation of the reinvestigation of abduction victims as promised by North Korea during recent bilateral talks were heard yesterday in the government and the ruling parties.

Referring to the next round of bilateral talks to discuss the method to be used in the reinvestigation, Foreign Minister Masahiko Koumura on a TV Asahi talk show said, "We should move on to the next round because a reinvestigation must take place quickly." He took a stance of aiming at holding bilateral talks without a pause from the previous round, which took place on June 11 and 12. Chief Cabinet Secretary Nobutaka Machimura in an outdoor speech in Tokyo expressed the government's position: "The government is now about to determine its policy regarding what form the envisaged reinvestigation should take and how the results of the investigation should be verified. We will shortly discuss those matters in concrete terms with North Korea." He indicated that the government plans to finalize the reinvestigation method and the way verification should be accomplished.

The government wants to hurry to implement the reinvestigation, because the delisting of North Korea from the U.S. blacklist will take effect on Aug. 11. It intends to proceed with talks with the DPRK, using Japan's participation in the energy assistance program as a bargaining chip. Japan is not taking part in the program at present.

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Regarding this approach, Koumura on an NHK TV program underscored, "Japan's key 'card' is its economic cooperation." Concerning humanitarian assistance, Machimura said, "The present situation does not allow us to implement humanitarian assistance, including the provision of food."

Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) Secretary General Bunmei Ibuki in an outdoor speech pointed out, "If the result of the envisaged reinvestigation is not satisfactory to Japan, we cannot possibly so easily provide aid, using our tax money." His remark means that though Japan plans to agree to partially lift its economic sanctions in return for the reinvestigation, it should cautiously consider the propriety of extending economic and energy aid.

Kyoko Nakayama, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister responsible for the abduction issue, gave a speech in Kawaguchi City, Saitama Prefecture. Referring to a partial easing of the economic sanctions, she said, "We must not lift the sanctions until North Korea locates the missing persons' whereabouts and their return to Japan becomes certain." She took a stance that the government should not lift its sanctions against North Korea unless moves for the repatriation of abductees take shape. She continued, "There are at present no specific moves for the government to lift the sanctions against North Korea."

8) LDP secretary general states that Japan, North Korea will jointly

conduct reinvestigation into abductees; On U.S.-DPRK relations: "There is a possibility of the U.S. having been deceived"

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
June 30, 2008

Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) Secretary General Bunmei Ibuki on June 29 gave an outdoor speech in Musashino City, Tokyo. Referring to the promised reinvestigation into the abductions of Japanese nationals by North Korea, he said, "Since North Korea always comes up with the same results, we have made an arrangement for a joint reinvestigation of the issue, joined by Japanese experts." Ibuki is the first government official who has categorically stated that Japan and North Korea would jointly conduct the envisaged reinvestigation.

Concerning the U.S. government having entered into procedures for delisting North Korea from its list of state sponsors of terrorism, Ibuki expressed concern about Washington's approach, noting, "The former Clinton administration sent Secretary of State Albright to Pyongyang, but its efforts ended in failure. In my view, there is a strong possibility of the U.S. having been deceived by North Korea again."

9) DPJ's Maehara: Japan relies too much on U.S. regarding abduction issue

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Full)
June 28, 2008

In a speech delivered in Kyoto on June 27, Seiji Maehara, former president of the main opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), referred to the United States' decision to delist North Korea as a state sponsor of terrorism followed by the North's presentation of a list of its nuclear programs:

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"The framework of the six-party talks was created to resolve (North Korea's) nuclear issues, but not to resolve the issue of Japanese abductees to North Korea. It is only natural for America to decide to delist the DPRK if it is determined that doing such will serve the best interests of it."

Maehara then took a view that Japan should take part in an international effort to provide North Korea with economic and energy assistance.

He stated on the abduction issue:

"A resolution of the abduction issue is a precondition for normalization of diplomatic ties between Japan and North Korea. Japan should severely pursue the issue in bilateral normalization talks. The Japanese government excessively depends on America, expecting even improvement on the abduction issue (in the framework of the six-party talks)."

10) Excerpts from "Hodo 2001," broadcast on June 29

SANKEI (Page 5) (Full)
June 30, 2008

Chief Cabinet Secretary Nobutaka Machimura talked about prospects for the G-8 in Hokkaido and the possible impact of the U.S. decision to delist North Korea from its list of state sponsors of terrorism on the abductions of Japanese nationals.

-- Do you think that participants can agree to cut greenhouse gas emissions in concrete terms at the G-8?

"Representatives of the participating countries are now working out details on final wording. We must move a step forward from the previous Heiligendamm Summit."

-- Is it possible to realize the Fukuda Vision of cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 60 PERCENT to 80 PERCENT by 2050?

"It would not be possible to meet this target without drastic technical development. We are now injecting a considerable amount of money into technical development for innovative and creative programs. However, since we still have a long way to go, we will continue our efforts boldly."

-- Families of the victims of abduction are feeling anxiety following the delisting of North Korea by the U.S. What is your view on that?

"Designating a country as a state sponsor of terrorism is not the only way of pressing it. The U.S. maintains sanctions based on a UN resolution. Japan has not made its stance clear regarding a ban on exports to and imports from that nation and humanitarian assistance. North Korea above all wants Japan's technology and a considerable amount of money. We want them to understand that Japan has such means."

-- Is the Bush administration feeling pressed to achieve a legacy?

"I do not know about that. North Korea has come to the second stage, following the joint statement by six countries in September 2005. (The declaration) does not refer to nuclear weapons. This must be

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sought strictly at the final stage."

-- Will the abduction issue be brought up at the G-8?

"Yes. We will do our utmost."

11) Japan, U.S., Australia agree in foreign ministerial to come up with guidelines for disaster relief cooperation

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Full)
June 28, 2008

Foreign Minister Masahiko Koumura met on the night of June 27 in Kyoto with U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Australian Foreign Minister Stephen Smith. The three reached an agreement on a plan to come up with a new framework for information sharing and guidelines to step up cooperation on disaster relief and humanitarian assistance in the Asia-Pacific region. The three countries will hold consultations of working-level officials probably in November.

In the expected consultations, representatives from the three countries will exchange views on antiterrorism measures and weapons of mass destruction.

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12) DPJ Secretary General Hatoyama: I really suffered in maintaining relations with Mr. Ozawa

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Full)
June 29, 2008

Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) Secretary General Yukio Hatoyama gave a speech on June 28 in Hashimoto City, Wakayama Prefecture. Asked about his relations with DPJ President Ichiro Ozawa, Hatoyama confided that he had "really suffered," citing last year's grand alliance uproar and the appointment of new Bank of Japan governor in April.

Speaking of the party's response to the government's nomination Hiroshi Watanabe, former vice finance minister for international affairs, for Bank of Japan deputy governor Hatoyama said: "Since our views (Ozawa and Hatoyama's) were different, I wondered whether I could continue to serve as secretary general." He underscored the present situation, noting: "After all that, we are now able to understand each other. We will unite to fight the next House of Representatives election to secure the reins of government."

13) UN Secretary General Ban urges Japan to set higher greenhouse gas reduction target

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Abridged slightly)
June 30, 2008

Visiting UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon in a speech at a town-hall meeting on global warming held on June 29 at Kyoto University called on Japan to set a far-reaching medium-term target for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions to take a leading role in the international community in the fight against global warming.

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Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda has projected that Japan would be able to slash greenhouse gas emissions by 14 PERCENT from 2005 levels by 2020. Ban in the speech urged Japan to make greater efforts to cut emissions further ahead of discussions on global warming at the upcoming the G-8 Lake Toya summit. In a question-and-answer session with panelists, Ban categorically indicated that the industrialized nations that have emitted a large amount of greenhouse gases should take responsibility in reducing such gases. Ban also noted that he would hold a meeting with Fukuda on June 30, saying that crafting a new framework replacing the Kyoto Protocol would require top-level political decisions.

Participants representing industrial circles expressed concern that intellectual property rights might be infringed upon as a result of technology transfers to developing countries to assist their efforts to combat global warming. Ban, upon underlining the need to protect intellectual property rights, said: "Such concern must not hinder technology transfers." He also indicated that Japan, as a world leader in technological innovation, should take political responsibility significantly in the mechanism of financial support and technology transfers to developing countries.

14) Battle of Okinawa, A-bombing to be described for first time in school curriculum guidelines

SANKEI (Page 3) (Full)
June 30, 2008

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology has decided to describe for the first time the Battle of Okinawa, the Great Tokyo Air Raids, and the atomic bombing on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the elementary school curriculum guidelines to be used from fiscal 2011. The purpose is to improve curriculums on the history of war. The ministry will explain this to prefectural board of education members in a briefing session starting today.

According to an education ministry official, almost all social studies textbooks for elementary schools describe the three incidents. Therefore, elementary schools will likely be able to give more specific explanations to students by using the guideline descriptions.

Regarding the Battle of Okinawa, at the request of Okinawa Prefecture, the ministry has rewritten the description that the Japanese military ordered or forced Okinawan people to commit mass suicide, which had been for a while deleted in the process of screening high-school history books. At that time, Minister Kisaburo Tokai had released a statement that the ministry would improve school curriculums on the Battle of Okinawa.

SCHIEFFER